

*Listing of Claims*

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus storing a computer-readable module for use in a host computer, where the module comprises:
  - a functional component for providing a predetermined programming functionality;
  - an installation component that manages installation of the functional component;
  - and
  - a preprocessing interface ~~component~~ for providing introspective information about any requirements of the functional component in response to a request from the host computer.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the preprocessing interface comprises a command sequence that identifies the functional component.
3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the preprocessing interface comprises executable object code that identifies the functional component.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the request from the host computer occurs as part of an installation of the module in the host computer.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the request from the host computer occurs when the module is required by a second module stored at the host computer.
6. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the introspective information provided by the preprocessing interface ~~component~~ comprises version information for the module.

7. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the introspective information provided by the preprocessing interface ~~component~~ comprises identification of an external module required by the functional component.

8. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the introspective information provided by the preprocessing interface ~~component~~ comprises identification of the type of functional component.

9. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the introspective information provided by the preprocessing interface ~~component~~ comprises identification of at least a first resource at the host computer that will be modified by the functional component.

10. (Currently amended) A computer system comprising a first computer, where the first computer comprises:

a plurality of plugin modules, including at least a first plugin module comprised of an introspection interface ~~portion~~, an installation program component and a program behavior portion; and

a harness for evaluating the introspection interface ~~portion~~ of the first plugin module to determine if any resources are required for use of the program behavior portion of the first plugin module.

11. (Original) The computer system of claim 10 further comprising a second computer connected to the first computer, where the second computer includes a first resource required by the first plugin module that is transferred to the first computer upon request by the plugin installation program component.

12. (Original) The computer system of claim 10 further comprising a second computer connected to the first computer, where the second computer includes a first resource required by the first plugin module that is transferred to the first computer upon request by the harness.

13. (Currently amended) The computer system of claim 11, wherein the first resource comprises a second plugin module comprised of an introspection interface ~~portion~~ and a program behavior portion, and wherein the harness is further structured to evaluating the introspection interface ~~portion~~ of the second plugin module to determine if any resources are required for use of the program behavior portion of the second plugin module.

14. (Currently amended) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the harness comprises:

- a loader component for loading a plugin module comprised of an introspection interface ~~portion~~ and a program behavior portion;
- a validator component for interfacing with the introspection interface ~~portion~~ to identify any resources required by the plugin module; and
- a finder component for surveying the computer system for any resources identified by the validator component.

15. (Currently amended) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the introspection interface ~~portion~~ is an executable script, command series or object-code module.

16. (Currently amended) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the installation manager ~~portion~~ is an executable script, command series or object-code module.

17. (Original) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the computer system is a client/server system and the first plugin module is a client plugin module.

18. (Original) The computer system of claim 10 wherein the computer system is a client/server system and the first plugin module is a server plugin module.

19. (Currently amended) A method of preprocessing a software module comprised of an interface ~~portion~~ and a program portion, comprising:

receiving a first software module;  
querying the interface ~~portion~~ of the first software module to identify any  
resources required by the program portion; and  
installing the first software module if all resources required by the program  
portion are available.

20. (Currently amended) The method of claim 19, further comprising  
retrieving any resources required by the program portion that were identified as a result  
of querying the interface ~~portion~~ prior to invocation of the first software module.

21. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising retrieving any  
resources required by the program portion that were identified as a result of invoking an  
installation manager portion of the first software module.

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20 wherein the retrieved  
resource comprises a second software module comprised of an introspective interface  
~~portion~~ and a program portion, further comprising querying the interface ~~portion~~ of the  
second software module to identify any resources required by the program portion of the  
second software module.

23. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the step of receiving a first  
software module comprises connecting to a remote computer over a telecommunication  
network and downloading the first software module from the remote computer.